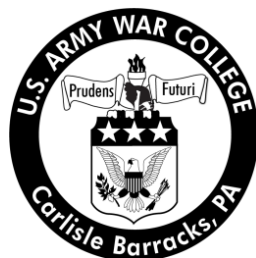


# Strategy Research Project International Fellow

## Saudi Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Identifying and Applying Lessons Learned

by

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United States Army War College  
Class of 2013

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## **Saudi Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Identifying and Applying Lessons Learned**

Terrorism is a global plague that has been ongoing for hundreds of years. While the concept of terrorism has recently been brought to the forefront in news cycles in the western world (specifically on 9/11), it has raged on in other parts of the world for hundreds of years. Isolation of this type of plague is fundamental to the success of one day eradicating it. To contain such an issue, one must look at the root causes to such a plague and formulate an effective plan that is proactive in its solution.

To understand terrorism, first we must try to define the complex concept. Historically, the term terrorism derived from the Latin word *terrere*, meaning, “to cause to tremble”. Throughout the centuries, the term has been linked mostly with politics and clashing political views. For example, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the French masses rose against the absolute monarchy of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette for their decadence during a fiscal crisis. The commoners wanted their government to change; therefore they filled the streets with their presence and stormed the Bastille to regain control; thus leading to the French Revolution. This example of “terrorism” seems completely justified: the rulers of a broke country pampered themselves in luxury, while they ignored the needs of the masses. Today, the definition of the word has taken somewhat of a dramatic turn.

To anyone who watches TV or reads the news, the definition of “terrorism” seems to have dramatically changed. During the French Revolution the people were fighting for their freedom from tyranny of the state. The “state” was the sponsor of the terrorism on the people. People were fighting for basic rights and needs such as food, liberty, and justice. Today one of the dominant driving factors of modern day terrorism is religious fundamentalism.

In today’s world, most terrorist acts are “public acts of destruction, committed without a clear military objective, that arouse a widespread sense of fear.”<sup>1</sup> Many such acts have something

to do with religious fundamentalism, but not all. An example of an act without any religious ties is the recent school shooting at Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012. While these acts do occur, they are very rare in nature. While the perpetrator of this heinous act apparently had no political or religious motivations, it seems that one could consider it a terrorist act according to most accepted definitions of terrorism, and he succeeded in terrorizing an entire nation.

### Defining Terrorism Today

The word “terrorism” can be divided into three separate categories: (1) terrorism in its most widely accepted meaning involves clash of political views, such as with Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing; (2) terrorism as an act of unclear, public chaos, such as Newtown Connecticut tragedy; and (3) terrorism in the name of religion, such as 9/11. The third category is the one this paper will concentrate on.

If the definition of terrorism has changed so much over the centuries, one should ask how people define it today. The government of the United States defines terrorism as:

any activity that (A) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; and (B) appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping."<sup>2</sup>

This definition explains that acts will be considered terrorism if they threaten human life and force political views. However, it is specific to the United States only, and does not touch on international affairs or how to deal with the driving act behind the action, or the root causes.

The United Nations definition also struggles to address these questions as the global community has yet to agree on a solid definition of terrorism. The definition

promoted by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan views terrorism as any action that intends "to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act."<sup>3</sup> One major problem in defining today's version of terrorism is that there are many diverse factors involved and there is a risk profiling an entire large group of society, such as the followers of a specific religion. The government of Saudi Arabia also does not have a single definition of terrorism. However, some institutions in Saudi Arabia have tried to define terrorism. Conflicting definitions of terrorism in many countries and international organizations are based on the diversity of interests of those particular states and organizations. The same holds true in the definitions of terrorism in Saudi Arabia, as it is subject to interpretation. Due to the fact that the Constitution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is primarily based on the Quran and Sunna "Sharia". In Saudi Arabia it was necessary to frame these definitions in the legal framework issued by the legislative authority, "The Commission of Senior Scholars," to comply with Sharia. There was a long delay in Saudi Arabia between the time terrorism became a problem for the country and the time this Commission issued a fatwa (legal opinion or decree) to guide behavior and inform the public and, at the same time provided a basis for governmental organizations. This delay contributed to the creation of some disparity in the fight against terrorism due to the lack of legal justification. After a long wait Saudi Arabia's highest religious authority, the commission of Senior Scholars issued a clear decisive edict in 2010 denouncing all acts of terrorism and criminalizing its financing.<sup>4</sup> This decision will create harmony between religious opinions and criminal law for the benefit of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Although the fatwa did not include an actual definition of terrorism, it gave a clear picture of terrorist practices: Terrorism is "targeting public resources, spreading corruption, hijacking planes, and bombing buildings." The Commission's decision also criminalized the financing of terrorism, labeling the "partner" in crime.<sup>5</sup> In the understanding of terrorism used in this fatwa, terrorism is a criminal act that aims at the bloodshed of innocents, undermining security, frightening people, and causing harm and unrest. Terrorism also seeks to cause tensions, target peaceable societies, and destroy institutions vital for society. In Saudi Arabia, all these acts are criminalized under Sharia, because they represent disruption to life.

The fact of the matter is that there is no standard international definition for the problems that we are facing today. This leads to the question of how to contain a problem that not even authorities from global powers around the world have yet been able to define. Barak Mendelsohn points out, "Consequently, rather than viewing terrorism as a threatening phenomenon that requires comprehensive collective treatment, states tended to identify as terrorism only the threats against themselves and their close allies. Outside their small universe, they normally saw only a host of separate conflicts between states and local groups that manifested local grievances through violence. Even when states did consider terrorism as a phenomenon, their divergent views on what constituted terrorism and who could be considered a terrorist, as well as on its causes and how best to confront it, obstructed any meaningful, broadly collaborative action".<sup>6</sup> He also says, "A state's failure to agree on a common definition of terrorism stands out as a critical obstacle to collaboration."<sup>7</sup>

One must also look deeper at the concept of terrorism, and within it the concept of “terrorist” vs. “freedom fighter.” While this topic seems rather clear cut by the terms themselves, the issue is much deeper. Also, while the term may sound like a cliché, it is a logic that is used by both sides of the argument frequently. In an article, Conor Friedersdorf explains, “As a descriptor, terrorist is almost never applied rigorously and consistently to describe the tactics a group is using -- rather, it is invoked as a pejorative to vilify the actions only of groups one wishes to discredit. People who agree with the ends of the very same groups often don't think of them as terrorists, the negative connotation of which causes them to focus on what they regard as the noble ends of allies they're more likely to dub freedom fighters.”<sup>8</sup> While the argument over the terms will continue, one irrefutable fact is that in the process innocent lives are lost and the disruption of peaceful societies continues.

Before we concentrate on the Saudi counter-terrorism strategy, we must address the question of who performs such acts.

“This is not just a semantic issue,” argues Mark Juergensmeyer, “Whether or not one uses “terrorist” to describe violent acts depends on whether one thinks that the acts are warranted. To a large extent the use of the term depends on one’s worldview: if the world is perceived as peaceful, violent acts appear as terrorism. If the world is thought to be at war, violent acts may be regarded as legitimate.”<sup>9</sup>

In our example about the French Revolution, the French masses rose against the monarchy. According to the Latin definition of terrorism, these masses were in every meaning of the word terrorists. However, as stated by Mark Juergensmeyer, with all of the suffering caused by the monarchy their (the masses’) “acts [were, or could be understood to be warranted”. On the other hand, some deeds can rightly be deemed as unquestionably terroristic; such is the case with the recent Newtown shootings. There is

no point of view in which the incident at Newtown can be justified as warranted. Yes, there is the matter that the U.S. is a peaceful country and that acts to this degree that would disturb this peace would be deemed as being an act of terror. Yet even in a warring country-without having any political or religious reasons for conducting such a slaying, the act would still I think be considered terrorism.

Lastly, who conducts terrorist acts in the name of religion? Although terrorism in the name of religion seems to be the modern phenomenon, there are major instances in history where religion played a big part; for example, the Crusades, and even more so the Spanish Inquisition of the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Once more these two major historical events can be analyzed using Juengensmeyer's above quote. The Crusades, from the Knight's point of view, were a noble act of God: They conquered villages and rode through countries to spread the word of Christianity so that the souls of the peasants might be saved. Looking through the eyes of Isabel and Ferdinand of Spain, during the Inquisition, insuring the stability of their religion meant forcing the conversion or expulsion of many Muslims and Jews. From the conductors' point of view, this reasoning in the name of religion seems solid; less like an act of terrorism and more like value setting. However, when changing point of views with those who were most affected by these changes (the villages of Europe, and Muslims and Jews of Spain) forcing religion on those of a different background seems unimaginable. Furthermore, the result of Spain's royalty pushing for a pure Christian nation caused many good Christian people to be targeted because of their imperfections and tortured until they confessed their false involvement with another religion.

Today's terrorism is different to that of the past few centuries in that it has morphed into something more even more destructive and senseless. The beliefs of today's religious terrorism

are more extreme in terms of religious rules and more destructive in terms of collateral damage. Such examples can be found in the destruction of the Twin Towers and attack on the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the subway bombings in Moscow on 2010, and the list could unfortunately go on and on. The ideologies behind these attacks are only loosely based on the basic fundamentals of Islam; the non-threatening fundamentals of this religion have been manipulated into extreme ideas by extreme thinkers and activists or “fundamentalists”.

In his book, *Quranic Concept of War*, S.K. Malik discusses some key aspects to understanding the religious aspect of terrorism. He says, “Islamic Law regulates declaration of war as also the limitations imposed on its conduct; upon examination, it would appear that Islamic Law has been designed to promote ideals of justice. In Chapter 11 verse 190 [of the Quran] we have reference to the duty of Muslims to “fight in the cause of God those who fight you and be not aggressors. God loveth not those who are aggressors.””<sup>10</sup> This point is extremely important when trying to analyze the impact the plague of terrorism has on Islam.

Charismatic individuals have the power to twist religious ideology to pursue their own political aspirations or goals. Time and time again, the ages of those who commit such acts of terrorism provide the data to back up the point that the youth are targeted to commit such acts. Also for some living in poverty and desolation, there is not a lot of hope for the future. Leaders of these stray ideologies know that it would likely be difficult for them to influence the elderly people, whereas it is easy to manipulate the emotions of the youth.

Malik also points out that the Quran says, “Oh, ye who believe, stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealings, and let not the hatred of other people to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is next to piety. And fear God. Surely, Allah is

aware of what you do.”<sup>11</sup> According to scholars such as Malik, Islam simply does not condone such acts of terror.

The Quran consistently points out that every man must answer for each of his deeds and transgressions. Malik points out there is a famous directive by Khalifa Abu Bakr reflecting the moderation and humanitarian approach of Islamic Law, in which Abu Bakr said, “Remember that you are always under the gaze of God, and on the eve of your death; that you will **have** to reckon on the Last Day...When you fight for the glory of God behave like men, without turning your back, but let not the blood of women or that of children or the aged tarnish your victory. Do not destroy only to God.”<sup>12</sup> This powerful directive clearly indicates that indiscriminate killing of the innocent is simply not justified and that those whom commit such acts will answer to God on judgment day.

### Causes of Terrorism

According to Nayef al-Marwani, the causes of terrorism and extremism are varied and mixed. These causes lead to evidence that the motives are psychological and/or social, economic and/or political. According to al-Marwani, the Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs in Saudi Arabia, researchers identified a variety of reasons that need to be studied, to determine a realistic and integrated approach to the causes of terrorism and extremism, including:

1. Consider the extremist ideology factor in violence and terrorism, because the extremists believe that they are right and others are wrong, and that other reformers are spoilers.
2. For some, low level of education is one of the most prominent characteristics and attributes for perpetrators of terrorist operations, who are easily persuaded and deceived by the leaders of the terrorist cell. Other factors are the spread of illiteracy and low cultural level.



3. There is no economic class whether poor or rich without terrorists, but it is noted that the recruitment of individuals who belong to poor communities and the unemployed into terrorist organizations is generally easier. Some studies indicate that poverty may cause personal weakness, such as greater likeliness to follow the bad Ideologies, feel hatred of society, and contempt for public systems. Those who feel they have nothing to lose, are more likely to join terrorist and extremist groups, which give them a feeling of compensation what they have lost.
4. Weak faith affects the behavior of the individual, so that the majority of researchers think the necessity of strengthening the faith and ethics in the individuals where weakness of faith and ethical disorder would make individuals prey to the psychological disorders that lead to different deviations such as extremism and terrorism.
5. Weakness of family coherence, as a result of family break-up and marital disputes, or a lack of parental care, could contribute to children becoming susceptible to ideological deviation. When organizational structures, which can provide socialization, are limited, there can be deficiencies in the performance of social roles, and this can lead to the deviation.
6. The absence of role models in schools, especially teachers. Teachers are educators who occupy most of the children's time outside of the home.
7. Inability of people to understand the evidence, and their own interpretation, and the violation to the consensus of Muslims Scholars for their interpretations of such evidence.

8. Blind obedience to and overconfidence in the leaders of stray ideologies.
9. Absence of dialogue within families, schools and the media, which results in the opportunity for the emergence of ideas outside of the public realm, transmitted to individuals in secret, such unquestioned ideas can develop into interior seeds of extremism that produces terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

According to Cordesman and Obaid, “terrorism is not new to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has been the target of sporadic terrorist activity since the 1960’s, when Gamal Abdul Nasser made repeated attempts to create groups that could overthrow the Saudi government and to subvert the Saudi military.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, during the 1990’s the country was burdened with the task of handling internal security problems when al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, began terrorist acts against the monarchy in order to destroy it. These incidents created major challenges for the Saudi government as al-Qaeda went international by targeting the United States.<sup>15</sup> To date no governments have found a foolproof method to deal with terrorism. In the following pages, I will analyze commonly used methods to combat today’s current issues related to terrorism in Saudi Arabia.

### Direct Measures

Effective counter-terrorism strategies concentrate on treating the causes rather than reacting to the symptoms. In essence, being proactive rather than reactive. Results are more likely to be positive when integrating the use of force with engaging hearts and minds, rather than concentrating only on force and violence. As the need to have an effective security system increases, simultaneously there is an expansion of the need to synchronize and integrate all assets, both governmental and social, and to integrate the domestic effort with the international

effort by cooperating with both international organizations and allied countries, to ensure the benefit of Saudi Arabia in particular, and the international community in general.

The Saudi government adopted its counter-terrorism strategy by using the integration of the stick and carrot system<sup>16</sup>:

- Prevention: "the stick" using the security forces and utilizing local officials and often citizens to act in cooperation with the government, by being the eyes and ears of the security apparatus in order to detect and prevent terrorist attacks.
- Engaging Hearts **and** Minds: "carrot" by using direct and indirect programs to rehabilitate the offenders.

Prevention is important because of the need to guard the people, economic resources, and governmental organizations and key senior leaders who can become targets of terrorism as well. A good example of the latter was an incident that occurred when Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, was targeted in 2009 by a suicide bomber in his office. By using the prevention method, the interior forces have stopped numerous terrorist attacks. A disadvantage of this method is that the continual cycle of hate and violence continues.

In order to use the "carrot" method effectively, hearts and minds must be engaged. The heart is engaged by giving people hope by not treating the offenders as if they are beyond rehabilitation. The Saudi experience has shown that showing simple respect in not calling the person in question a terrorist has a definite impact. For example, by not degrading the individual to the point where all hope is lost, instead this gives the individual an opportunity to repent. This can open windows for the scholars and experts to engage their minds by using knowledge vs. knowledge, using direct and indirect reform programs. Direct programs are organized to address

the terrorism directly, such as Munasaha (Providing Advice) and Sakinah Program (Easing of Tensions Program).

In order to discuss this further, a short background about life in Saudi Arabia is required. Life, and thus the culture of Saudi Arabia, is comprised of two major elements, the social side and the religious side.

A Saudi's social identity begins at the tribal level. Saudi Arabia's population is comprised of clusters of tribal groups. These tribal clusters are very well acquainted with their own people. When any member of the tribe breaks the law or is disloyal to the country, the tribe condemns the act and sends the issue to its sheikhs. Their job is to investigate the issue in order to determine the severity of the offense, and to eventually establish solution for the problem. As Metz explains, "the tribal unit is not only responsible for avenging any wrong that was done to one of its members, but also bears the responsibility of paying compensation to anyone one of its members may have wronged."<sup>17</sup> This process precedes, and in most cases, solves the issue before the recourse to the governmental law is necessary. Blum and Heymann point out, that the "generality" of law tends to put governments at a disadvantage when facing impending issues related to terrorism or other emergencies.<sup>18</sup> The Saudi government would rather allow the local tribal leadership to intervene to correct the issue since their authority and influence is so effective in quelling inappropriate behaviors.

In Saudi Arabia, religion dominates much of what happens in society. Saudi Arabia is a theocracy based on Islam. We understand Islam as a religion based on the principles of forgiveness and peace. While the global perception of Islam strays from these principles, it is vital to understand what Islam is at its very core. While headlines pertaining to terrorism have dominated the Middle East and many other Muslim-majority societies, there is more to the

religion then terrorism. Terrorism and the murder of the innocent have not been, and will never be acceptable in Islam.

At the heart of the Islamic ethic is the point that the sanctity of innocent life must be respected. This is evidenced in the following verse from the Qur'an, "owing to that "first instance murder", we ordained for the Children of Israel that whosoever takes an innocent life for other than retribution for murder or murderous sedition in the land it is as if he has killed all of humanity, and whoever saves a life it is as if he has saved all of humanity. Our Messengers have come to them with clear proofs, yet even after that many of them exceed limits in the land."<sup>19</sup> This verse emphasizes that the immunity extended to innocents is a principle that was upheld by all of the Prophets. Hence, the specific mention of the Children of Israel, who were the recipients of a long line of Prophets, and the mentioning of the Messengers at the end of the verse is a powerful principle for Muslims, disregarding the immunity that is extended to innocents is to abandon an indispensable part of the divine law; this is emphasized by Imam al-Qurtubi. In his commentary on this verse 5:32 of the Quran, he states: "the meaning is that whoever makes it lawful to take the life of a single innocent person has made everyone's life unlawful, because he has rejected the divine law."<sup>20</sup>

Hence, Islam takes a strong stand against terrorism and killing innocent people. However, at the same time Islam shows tolerance to accept the penitent with open arms. A Quran verse explains this, "Except those who repent and do righteous deeds, and openly declare (the truth which they concealed). These, I will accept their repentance. And I am the One who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful."<sup>21</sup> Helping them learn from their mistakes and contribute effectively to society is beneficial for all of society, and at the core of the Munasaha Program. Saudi community is a religious society; therefore, religious belief may lead any person to do

what is consistent with his beliefs without fear of any consequences. This is why Saudi Arabia includes Muslim religious guidance in its counseling and correctional programs.

The Saudi Arabian ideological Advisory Program works on both the social and religious aspects of life, and not only targets those who have been involved in terrorist activity but also every single citizen throughout Saudi Arabia via various platforms. According to the Coordinator for the Munasaha Committee and Executive President of the Enlightenment Program Saeed Al-Wadi, the focus of the program is Friday sermons, lectures and religious gatherings and competitions held at mosques, colleges and schools.<sup>22</sup> Other methods may include private meetings between the sheiks and the prisoners and the Sakinah Campaign and Internet Counter-Radicalization.<sup>23</sup>

It is not an easy task to change someone's thoughts and beliefs. While the terrorist elements had years to indoctrinate their hatred, those on the side of justice and peace have very little time to bring about change. The most important in the anti-terror strategies is to gain hearts and minds of the all the stakeholders within a society. To achieve that, the Ministry of Interior in Saudi Arabia has chosen some of the most highly educated and most influential Muslims sheiks in the society to conduct this advisory program by visiting jails and schools and using Internet advertising expansively.

As Rogan points out, "the prominent role of the internet in propagating and perpetuating violent Islamist ideology is well known. The speed, anonymity, and connectivity of the web have contributed to its emergence as a powerful source of knowledge and inspiration. It is an unrivaled medium to facilitate propaganda, fundraising, and recruitment efforts. The vast scope of information available, coupled with the absence of national boundaries, facilitates ideological cohesion and camaraderie between disparate and geographically separated networks. A broad

spectrum of individuals turn to the Internet to seek spiritual knowledge, search for Islamist perspectives, and attempt to participate in the global jihad. As such, identifying methods to short-circuit Internet radicalization has become an urgent goal for numerous governments”.<sup>24</sup> This illustrates why the Munasaha takes a multi-pronged approach to address the largest audience possible.

Boucek explains, “In recent years Saudi Arabia has quietly supported initiatives to combat Internet radicalization. One of the most developed programs is the *Sakinah* Campaign, which began several years ago to fight online radicalization and recruitment. Named after the Arabic word for religiously inspired tranquility, the Sakinah Campaign operates as an independent, non-governmental organization, supported by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. Similar to other counter-radicalization and demobilization strategies in the kingdom, the Sakinah Campaign uses Islamic scholars to interact online with individuals looking for religious knowledge, with the aim of steering them away from extremist sources.”<sup>25</sup> This in essence is the “carrot” that the Saudi government uses to get people back on the right track by using the religious elements of a Saudi’s life. It also shows the willingness and interconnectivity of the stakeholders of Saudi society. These sheikhs are on the right side of justice and morality. They do not want their religion or their country hijacked by terrorism. This provides clear and compelling evidence that this strategy is not solely in the hands of the government, but the people must play a vital role in the process as well. Proving that, the Sakinah campaign began on a voluntary basis by a group of Shaikhs, or religious scholars, after they realized the extent of the danger behind the use of the Web for communicating and dissemination of awry ideologies. It began combating militancy many years ago through the Internet, where it works as an independent non-governmental organization, supported by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.”<sup>26</sup>

To understand the purpose and role of the Sakinah program, we must look deeper into its effectiveness. The campaign states, “The kingdom has adopted a strategy to combat extremism and terrorism based on thorough inspection, scientific studies, sound implementation that differ from the methods used by other states in combatting terrorism.”<sup>27</sup> The campaign has created two programs for counseling. One program includes individual counseling, and another program includes group sessions of about 20 individuals. The two programs are described as:

- “Individual guidance sessions consist of several short sessions within a two-hour limit, often starting after (Maghrib) sunset prayers, and extending to late at night as the case may be. They are not lectures or tutorials but open dialogue with exchanges of pleasantries and generosity. They are held in prisons, and are characterized by absolute transparency and openness; these sessions do not often lead to prisoners to overturn their ideas.”<sup>28</sup>

- “Lengthy study sessions where religious scholars and sociologists lead a group of 30 people in a six-week lecture program, and it covers ten courses that include the following articles: Atonement, allegiance, disavowal, homage, terrorism, jurisprudence rules of Jihad, and self esteem.”<sup>29</sup>

To effectively combat a plague, which has no instantaneous cure, specific steps must be taken to work towards a solution. The Sakinah program uses a multifaceted approach to achieve success. In addition to the counseling program, they use sports, art, and social programs to help in this process. The Sakinah program is a model for other countries to possibly use in the fight against terrorism.

As Summary of the achievements of Sakinah campaign until 13/6/2010

- 1500 regressed to normalcy out of 3250, dialogued through forums and live chat programs.



- 50% of 3250 in the Gulf, 30% of the neighboring Arab countries, and 20% from Europe and America.

- 40% fully withdrew, 60% regressed from the most dangerous terrorist ideas.
- 66 members of Sakinah campaign and 13 of which were women.
- 400 volunteers.
- 800 sites and forums covered by the campaign.
- The material broadcast by the campaign reached 2400 subscribers weekly.
- Sakinah campaign was presented as a model for the Kingdom's efforts in dealing with extremist ideas in Saudi Arabia's statement on Human Rights in Geneva, 2010.<sup>30</sup>

Looking back at history, and at the events and the perpetrators of the attacks of 9/11, a majority of the terrorists involved in that act were from Saudi Arabia. In addition to that fact, the ages of the terrorists were in their 20's or early 30's.<sup>31</sup> Simply connecting the dots on these two important facts helps us understand the importance of the Sakinah Campaign. Using the same medium the terrorist elements use, namely the Internet to combat terrorism is a logical avenue. This is further supported by the fact that Internet usage in the Middle East has risen by over 2200% over the last ten years.<sup>32</sup> Almost 40% of Saudi Arabia's population now uses the Internet.<sup>33</sup> The Sakinah Campaign takes the fight where the fight is stewing. There is no easy solution to fighting an enemy who doesn't play by the "rules." Their tactics are ever changing. Therefore the counter-terrorism strategy must also be fluid. Saudi Arabia must be proactive in adapting to the fight against terrorism.

This program has achieved more than expected to by converting those with irrational ideas and bringing them back to functioning members of a peaceful society. While the

fight has not been easy, it has been effective. According to Boucek, the recidivist and rearrests rates are extremely low, at approximately 1 to 2 percent.<sup>34</sup> While the program is still very young, it will continue to adapt as needed. The Munasaha is a proactive strategy that continues to address the seed of the issue before it grows into a problem. The mercy and forgiveness aspects of the program are rooted within Saudi society, and to a greater extent Islam, which is the driving force behind a Saudi's everyday life. The responsibility to ensure a terrorism free society involves the entire country, including tribal and religious avenues. This issue is in the hands of all the stakeholders of society, not just the government. This partnership between the people and government will continue to evolve and adapt.

### Indirect Measures

Indirect measures must also be taken within societies fighting the plague of terrorism. While the direct measures deal with the problem specifically, indirect measures can help create societal conditions, which are proactive in nature. Saudi Arabia takes a multifaceted approach in creating indirect reform programs. The first societal component in which proactive measures were taken is education. As mentioned earlier, the youth are a targeted demographic for recruitment to conduct terrorist acts. Extremist ideologies can make their way into schools. To combat this, Saudi Arabia has taken steps to limit the influence of extremist ideology. In 2011, the Saudi Ministry of Education issued a resolution to withdraw from the libraries of public schools several books seen as inciting violence and prohibited book donations without prior approval. The Ministry announced its plan to conduct regular visits to school libraries to ensure that those and similar books are no longer available for students. "School libraries have always contained books that promote violence and extremism," the Minister of Education told Al Arabiya. "The writings of Muslim

Brotherhood leaders have had a strong influence on education in Saudi Arabia for the past three decades.”<sup>35</sup>

Economic reforms are key to a successful indirect program as well, by creating new jobs for the generations. Creating a fair and equitable job market is a step in the right direction for economic reforms. The Saudi economy grew rapidly in the early 2000’s and reached rates as high as 6.4 percent growth in 2003.<sup>36</sup> In a speech at the Shura Council, King Fahd made clear that the Saudi reform program was based on domestic initiatives, not foreign influence, and in the economic sphere the country was trying to enhance and diversify economic activity inside the Kingdom. He also stated that addressing the issues of poverty and unemployment through Saudization of jobs was of particular concern.<sup>37</sup> By helping create economic opportunity for the people of Saudi Arabia, it will take away one of the tools of terrorism recruiters in the recruitment process.

Politically Saudi Arabia is making steps to improve the rights of its citizens. One consideration is that such reforms may help to reduce feelings of frustration and hopelessness among youth about their future. While many would argue that Saudi Arabia is has a lot of ground to make up in this regard, it has made improvements. In a speech in 2003, King Fahd emphasized the need for administrative reform and the introduction of an electoral system to increase citizens participation in the political system.<sup>38</sup> An establishment of the Saudi Counter Corruption Commission is one such step. The Commission’s purpose is to reduce the impact of corruption within the government. In 2011, The Council of Ministers approved legislation defining the structure of the Anti-Corruption Commission, focusing the crime-fighting agency on

upholding transparency and combating financial and administrative fraud in government.<sup>39</sup>

Saudi Arabia is taking a proactive approach to countering terrorism. The programs treat the causes of the problem rather than reacting to the symptoms before it is too late. The strategy has shown that fighting fire with force, fire with fire, is not the only solution, but only one component of the broader fight against terrorism. Rehabilitation can occur, in fact the United States has indicated willingness to send 100 Yemeni detainees to Saudi Arabia to take part in the rehab process. Former Secretary of Defense Gates said, "Our positive impression of the repatriation program, the rehabilitation and repatriation program in Saudi Arabia. I think they've probably done as good if not better job of that than almost anybody and explored the possibility of some of the Yemeni detainees coming through that system. I think the notion would be if it worked at all it would be those with strong Saudi family connections or strong connections to Saudi Arabia."<sup>40</sup> This type of cooperation is key to global success against terrorism.

### Conclusion

While there is still a lot of controversy about the definition of terrorism globally and even within countries including Saudi Arabia, and a lack of international cooperation in the counter-terrorism, nevertheless Saudi Arabia has made very significant strides in this field internationally and locally. Presently the international effort in the rejection of terrorism continues as does terrorisms incompatibility with Islam. In this context, Saudi Arabia signed a lot of counter-terrorism agreements; Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism 1998, the Treaty of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to counter-terrorism in 2000, and the Convention on the Cooperation

Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to Combat Terrorism as well as bilateral security agreements with friendly countries.<sup>41</sup>

Saudi Arabia also called for an international conference in Riyadh; February 2005 based on the conviction that terrorism is not confined to people of a particular religion or country without the other and that success in the face requires the cooperation of all states. Also King Abdullah called to establish an international center for the exchange of information and experiences between countries and to create a security database to combat terrorism, and made the Kingdom a draft resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations calling for the formation of a working group to study the recommendations of the Riyadh to establish an international center to combat terrorism in accordance with what was announced by Prince Sultan in his speech to the Assembly General of the United Nations on 16 September 2005.<sup>42</sup>

At the domestic level Saudi Arabia adopted a comprehensive strategy based on ideology confrontation as well as security measures, implemented by all institutions. Saudi religious scholars have clarified that terrorism is inconsistent with Islam, and urged citizens to cooperate with security agencies in reporting on those involved, and have given counsel to some affected by involvement in terrorism. At the same time the security forces are achieving consecutive successes in the pursuit of terrorists and preemptive operations to thwart terrorist plots. Saudi leadership was keen in midst of battle to honor the martyrs of the security forces and console their families. Taking into consideration the feelings of the parents of perpetrators of terrorist acts, the Saudi leadership was also keen to open a window of return and to declare amnesty for the repentant that surrender. This policy has achieved excellent results as some terrorists have proclaimed repentance. The Judiciary established a tribunal for terrorism cases to provide

guarantees for the accused to a fair trial, including their right to defend themselves and to compensate those who are found innocent of them.<sup>43</sup>

Protective direction, with the participation of all the media carried out awareness programs in schools and universities to strengthen intellectual security. In a number of Saudi universities academic chairs have been established to deal with terrorism related research. The government has encouraged the printing of books, pamphlets and the intensification of the activities of the youth welfare programs. Also the government has issued regulations for using the Internet, in order to counter electronic-terrorism. Lastly the government worked through the official organs to dry up the sources of terrorism and organized fundraising for charities and establishment of a body to oversee the charities.<sup>44</sup>

This strategy has had a positive impact on the ground. One newspaper article even claimed that Saudi security forces spoil more than 95% of terrorist plots before they could be implemented, and even gained access to a number of sleeper cells.<sup>45</sup> Also, there are studies, which claim that the proportions of recidivism for those who have been graduated from the intellectual counseling programs do not exceed 2%. These are the indications of how successful the Saudi counter-terrorism strategy has been in general.

## Endnotes

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<sup>3</sup> Barak Mendelsohn, *Combating Jihadism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 96.

<sup>4</sup> Fatwa, Decision No. 239, April 12, 2010, <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=565041&issueno=11459>

<sup>5</sup> Abdel Wahab El Saleh, "Saudi fatwa defining terrorism seen as major step," April 19, 2010, [http://al-shorfa.com/en\\_GB/articles/meii/features/main/2010/04/19/feature-01](http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/features/main/2010/04/19/feature-01) (accessed October 10, 2012).

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 91.

<sup>8</sup> Conor Friedersdorf, "Is One Man's Terrorist Another Man's Freedom Fighter?," May 16, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/05/is-one-mans-terrorist-another-mans-freedom-fighter/257245/> (accessed December 20, 2012).

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Nayef al-Marwani, "Policeman Thought," 20. No. 76 (January 2011) 65.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, *National Security in Saudi Arabia: Threats, Responses and Challenges* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005), 109.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Sakinah Homepage, <http://www.assakina.com/news/news3/8724.html> (accessed January 27, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Helen Chapin Metz, ed. *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study*. Washington: Library of Congress, 1992.

<sup>18</sup> Gabriella Blum and Phillip B. Heymann, *Laws, Outlaws, and Terrorists* (London: The MIT Press, 2010) 7.

<sup>19</sup> Quran 5:32.

<sup>20</sup> Imam Zaid, "The Deeper Implications of Muslims Targeting Innocent Civilians," New Islamic directions: November 2, 2010. [http://www.newislamicdirections.com/nid/articles/the\\_deeper\\_implications\\_of\\_muslims\\_targeting\\_innocent\\_civilians\\_reprinted](http://www.newislamicdirections.com/nid/articles/the_deeper_implications_of_muslims_targeting_innocent_civilians_reprinted) (accessed June 10, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Quran 2:116.

<sup>22</sup> Saudi Gazette Homepage, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentID=2009102952934> (accessed June 12, 2012).

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<sup>33</sup> *CIA World Factbook Homepage*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html> (accessed June 15, 2012).

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